

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-14 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20

RSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15

PRS-01 CPR-02 OMB-01 DRC-01 /125 W

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R 161814Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5638

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 13446

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UK, IR

SUBJECT: BRITISH AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO IRAN

1. FCO ANNOUNCEMENT NOVEMBER 15 THAT SIR PETER RAMS-BOTHAM WILL BE NEW BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON ALSO MENTIONED HE WOULD BE SUCCEDED IN TEHRAN BY ANTHONY PARSONS, CURRENTLY FCO ASSISTANT UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE (SUPERVISING MIDDLE EAST AND UN AFFAIRS).

2. OUR FCO CONTACTS TELL US PARSONS WILL BE SUCCEDED AT FCO BY MICHAEL WEIR, COUNSELLOR AND HEAD OF CHANCERY OF UKUN. WEIR PREVIOUSLY SUCCEDED PARSONS IN THE UKUN JOB.

3. THE CHANGEOVER IS PRESENTLY SCHEDULED FOR MID-JANUARY, ENDING IN MID-FEBRUARY AFTER LEAVE-TAKING.

4. THE APPOINTMENT TO AN IMPORTANT CLASS 2 POST CAN BE CONSIDERED QUITE A PROMOTION FOR PARSONS, WHO HAS NEVER HELD AN AMBASSADORIAL ASSIGNMENT BEFORE. BORN IN 1922, HE WAS IN THE MILITARY 1940-54. AFTER A STINT AS ASSISTANT MILITARY ATTACHE IN BAGHDAD 1952-54, HE JOINED THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND HAS SINCE SERVED IN ANKARA, AMMAN, CAIRO, KHARTOUM, BAHRAIN, AND UKUN, AS WELL AS THREE
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TIMES IN LONDON.

5. WE HAVE ENJOYED VERY CLOSE AND CORDIAL WORKING RELATIONS WITH TONY PARSONS HERE, AND HE REMAINS WELL DISPOSED TOWARD AMERICANS. ALTHOUGH FORMALLY REPORTING TO A DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY IN THE FCO HIERARCHY, PARSONS HAS IN FACT BEEN ALLOWED TO CALL THE SHOTS ON MIDDLE EASTERN MATTERS WHILE HIS SUPERIOR (MARTIN LE QUESNE) HAS CONCENTRATED ON AFRICA. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT PARSONS HAS RISEN CONTINUOUSLY IN THE ESTIMATION OF FONSEC DOUGLAS-HOME, WHO HAS A SPECIAL PERSONAL INTEREST IN ME AFFAIRS. AT THE SAME TIME, WE HAVE FOUND PARSONS ESPECIALLY FRIENDLY, INFORMAL AND SOLICITOUS WITH MORE JUNIOR DIPLOMATS, BOTH THOSE IN HIS OWN SERVICE AND IN THE USG. HE HAS PERMITTED US EASY ACCESS AND SEEMS TO ENJOY CONVERSATIONS IN WHICH BOTH SIDES LET THEIR HAIR DOWN AND ARGUE FRANKLY. BY HIS OWN ADMISSION HE ENJOYS CONTROVERSY.

6. THAT IS NOT TO SAY THAT PARSONS HAS BEEN UNKNOWN TO DISSEMBLE, OVERSTATE, AND EXERCISE OTHER SKILLS OF THE CONSUMMATE DIPLOMATIST. BUT HE HAS AVOIDED MISSTATEMENTS OF THE TRUTH WITH US AND RETAINS A ROUGH-HEWN HOMEY INFORMALITY WHICH ENCOURAGES FRANKNESS AND DEVELOPS A MEASURE OF AFFECTION EVEN IN PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS.

7. PARSONS' WIFE, SHEILA, IS SIMILARLY INFORMAL AND OUTSPOKEN, WITH A TOUCH OF SHYNESS ON FORMAL SOCIAL OCCASIONS. THEY HAVE TWO SONS AND TWO DAUGHTERS.

8. WE WOULD IN DUE COURSE WELCOME USUN'S ASSESSMENT OF WEIR, ABOUT WHOM WE HAVE HEARD NICE THINGS FROM PARSONS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: mcintyresh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LONDON13446
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731129/aaaaavgt.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: mcintyresh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13-Jul-2001 by boyleja>; APPROVED <23-Aug-2001 by mcintyresh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO IRAN
TAGS: PFOR, UK, IR, (PARSONS), (RAMSBOTHAM, SIR PETER), (WEIR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005